DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 291 012 CG 020 544

AUTHOR Benjamin, Libby; Walz, Garry R.
TITLE 9 for the 90s: Counseling Trends for Tomorrow.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Personnel Services, Ann Arbor, Mich.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 88
CONTRACT 400-86-0014
NOTE 38p.
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC/CAPS, 2108 School of Education, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259 ($7.00).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Agents; Client Characteristics (Human Services); Cognitive Style; *Counselor Qualifications; *Counselor Role; *Futures (of Society); Individual Needs; Individual Power; *Marketing; Midlife Transitions; Population Trends; School Counselors; Stress Management; *Technology
IDENTIFIERS *Computer Assisted Counseling

ABSTRACT

This information analysis identifies emerging counseling priorities for the 1990s and suggests ways that counselors might prepare themselves for the future. The nine priorities discussed in the paper include: (1) learning to learn; (2) life transitions; (3) technology, computers, and counselors; (4) demographic trends and their impact on counseling; (5) marketing; (6) stress management; (7) resource resourcefulness; (8) change agentry; and (9) personal empowerment. Learning styles and preferences of students, reasons that counselors should counsel according to a client's learning style, and ways that counselors can help students learn to learn are examined. Differences between counseling adults and counseling students are explained, psychological concerns of adults seeking counseling are enumerated, and counselor areas of contribution are discussed. The section on technology gives characteristics of computers and technology, examines new and emerging counselor roles in using computers, and discusses counselor role priorities. Several demographic trends are identified and their impact on counseling is considered. Marketing issues discussed include product and service life cycle, marketing in counseling, marketing concepts, and a marketing list for counselors. The section on personal empowerment gives characteristics of self-empowered persons and describes counselor opportunities and responsibilities. (NB)

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9 FOR THE 90S:

COUNSELING TRENDS FOR TOMORROW

Libby Benjamin
Garry R. Walz

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This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education under contract no. 400-86-0014. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.

ERIC COUNSELING AND PERSONNEL SERVICES CLEARINGHOUSE
School of Education
The University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1259
Published by ERIC/CAPS

1988

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PREFACE

This paper was developed by the authors for a presentation at the annual convention of the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association in Toronto, Canada. Our purpose was to discuss emerging counseling priorities for the decade ahead, to "blue-sky" what we considered to be important issues in our profession, and suggest ways we could prepare ourselves to challenge, confront and conquer the future.

As counselors we experience so many competing demands on our time and energy that often we feel caught or trapped, without time for planning or thinking or self-renewal, simply reacting to exigencies of the moment. Unless we establish priorities as to where we put our efforts, we can become professional butterflies, flitting back and forth and not doing anything well, abandoning the standard of excellence for which we all strive. To be ready to take up the challenge, we as human service specialists need to build an agenda of priorities so that we can proactively prepare ourselves to be more than pawns of fate. And we must do more than just give attention to future issues. We must also make use of the expanding knowledge of human scientists, apply the results of research, and prepare ourselves in the knowledge and skills necessary to be abreast of and ahead of future demands. As we become empowered, we will become more assured of our capabilities. We will no longer shun new roles or responsibilities—we will seek them, knowing we have the wherewithal to accomplish our goals efficiently and effectively.

Our work in ERIC would suggest that the nine topics would be good nominations for issues that will command increased attention in the 1990s. Ultimately, each individual must develop his or her own list of priorities, according to his or her particular responsibilities and work setting. What we are really offering is a model for identifying important concerns; we are trying to share not only content but a process, for our list is drawn from research and study of emerging trends, based substantially on ERIC. The issues discussed here will match the priorities of some counselors much more than others. Our hope is, however, that identifying broad future concerns will serve to motivate human service specialists to develop their own personal agenda of priorities and prepare themselves in advance to respond in the most telling and effective ways.

Libby Benjamin
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Learning to Learn

A great many counselors today work in educational institutions. Whether they are employed at the high school or college level, they play a vital role in providing academic and vocational advising and counseling for students. As important as their contributions in these areas are to the development and matriculation of students, there is another area that is demanding increased attention—assisting students of all ages to learn to learn. One of the talents that students will use most in their lifetimes is the ability to learn new subject matter or skills readily and well, and to update their existing knowledge and skills. Students themselves are aware of how important this is. In repeated polls high school graduates have identified learning and study skills as one of the areas in which they felt they did not receive enough assistance and would like to have received more. Students appear to be seeking a general orientation to learning which will help them master a wide variety of learning tasks and will enable them to put their best foot forward in any learning situation, irrespective of their specific background or training. Typically, students respond very well to others' efforts to help them attain this goal. Whereas subject matter teaching is highly important, students may perceive it as irrelevant to their individual needs or areas of interest, but they see assistance in the learning process as something particularly oriented toward themselves, in that it is broad-based and helps them to do any number of tasks better and faster.

Learning style can be defined as the way in which different elements from five basic stimuli affect a person's ability to perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment. Specifically, the five basic learning style elements are: (1) environmental stimuli (light, sound, temperature); (2) emotional stimuli (structure, persistence, motivation, responsibility); (3) sociological stimuli (pairs, peers, adults, self, group); (4) physical stimuli (perceptual strengths, including auditory, visual, etc.); and (5) psychological stimuli (global/analytic, impulsive/reflective, and cerebral dominance).

By understanding the learning style preferences of students, counselors can more adequately assure the compatibility of their counseling approach with the interests and needs of their student clients. Among the more important justifications for counseling according to learning style are the following:

1. Individuals are unique and the counseling techniques/strategies/interventions must be tailored to accommodate uniqueness.

2. Counseling is fundamentally a learning process that, if successful, involves positive changes in the attitudes and behavior of the counselee.

3. Individuals have learning style preferences which, if attended to, will facilitate the learning process.

4. The counselee is able to identify his/her learning style preferences and can report these preferences accurately on a self-report inventory.

5. Counselors can plan interventions which are compatible with the learning style preferences of the individual counselee.

Counselor Areas of Contribution

While there are many ways in which a counselor may contribute to helping students learn to learn, a few stand out as particularly appropriate counselor interventions. And whatever a counselor does in this domain is likely to win support from the academic faculty, who all too often feel that counselors are somewhat removed from the real concern of the school or college, i.e., assisting students to acquire important academic knowledge and skills. Some important ways counselors can intervene are the following:

1. **Assist students to be aware of the importance of developing their own learning style.** Years of school are a poor indicator of the level of learning skills of any given student. Many advanced graduate students still demonstrate the rudimentary approaches to learning which they developed in their elementary years. Learning skills are taught, not caught, and unless students realize their importance, they may go through school (and life) relying on inadequate learning styles because they are unaware of any viable alternatives.

2. **Learn the specifics of each student's learning style.** Interested counselors can assist students to diagnose their present learning style and identify their strengths and weaknesses. In particular, they can help students customize their learning style to their own personal needs and interests so that learning becomes not so much a chore or a confrontation as a rewarding experience—the chance to increase their knowledge and skills and to expand their sense of competence and personal power.

3. **Assist students to acquire and master specific learning skills.** Many, if not the majority, of students have given little attention to the basics of learning such as the way they read, how they listen, how they use their time and manage their learning tasks, how they take notes, and their level of skill in higher-level thinking such as

problem solving, inference drawing, and critical thinking. It may be that counselors shy away from this phase of counseling because they themselves have approached the topic of learning and study skills only haphazardly. However, counselors can acquire skill in helping students learn to learn, which will greatly complement and supplement their knowledge of human development and ways of assisting individuals to become more personally effective. Acquiring these specific learning skills will enable students to approach their learning challenges with more interest and a greater sense of personal mastery.

4. **Assist students to put learning in a proper perspective.** Today's students are preparing for life in a learning society. Who they become and what they do will be dependent upon their ability to maintain and enhance their learning and development so that they continue to be personally and professionally renewed. Severe underachievers or non-achieving students may need considerable assistance and remediation. However, the many students who are performing adequately can increase their ability to master new challenges by the appropriate training and assistance in learning to learn.

Life Transitions

The myriad tomes of theory and comment on infant, child, and adolescent development have identified fairly clearly the tasks of youth and the transitional trauma that may accompany them. More recently, researchers have begun to examine the problems of the elderly. But only in the past decade or so has a significant number of scientists begun to view the adult years as a focus for research and study. This is particularly interesting since all of us are adults for most of our lives.

The 1990s will be a time when the ability to cope with transition will become increasingly important—as the number of people moving into retirement escalates, as unemployment rates continue to remain high or get higher, as more adults become involved in caring for their parents, as concern mounts about drug use, as more adults return to school, as people change careers more often and move about the country, as they experience change in occupational role and status, as increasing numbers of people face the aging process, as AIDS and yet-unknown social diseases frighten society, as sexual mores and family patterns become even less defined, as the use of leisure time becomes a critical issue. Change is always accompanied by some amount of stress—the more change, the

more stress. And in our society changes are occurring more and more rapidly. But if one adds to these escalating sociological and environmental stresses the vast number of variables that enter into the making of life decisions critical to adult satisfaction and contentment, it can be seen that the adult is a complex person indeed; and it is no wonder that adults often experience feelings of self-doubt, uncertainty, and anxiety about the future, and need help from time to time in resolving life's problems.

Adult counseling agencies designed to respond specifically to adult needs are springing up in a wide variety of settings, and the need will arise for a significant increase in the types, numbers and availability of such services. Already adult counseling is becoming a priority in many counselor training programs, and helping adults to cope with stressful life transitions should assume increasing importance for adult counselors-in-training.

A major priority for many 1990s counselors, then, will be to provide assistance to adults who are experiencing difficulty in managing change successfully. A first step in offering such help is to realize that adults are not merely tall children. They have different body characteristics, different learning histories, different reaction speeds, different attitudes, values, interests, motivations, and personalities. Several of these differences have implications for counseling:

1. **Experience**. Because most adults have been decision-makers, self-sustaining, and responsible for self and others, they organize their perceptions differently and possess different motivations and expectations.

2. **Attitudes**. Adults expect to participate fully in the decision-making process and may be more rigid in their thinking, as well as more realistic, than young persons. They are also likely to be more impatient and more highly motivated than youth.

3. **Developmental Tasks**. The tasks of adulthood are myriad, and thus adult needs will vary according to where individuals are in their life span.

4. **Pressures**. Adults may be limited or inhibited in their ability to try out and/or make changes freely because of their family and work responsibilities. Mistakes that can be laughed off or chalked up to experience for the young person can be costly in midlife, and adults must necessarily weigh consequences with care.

5. **Self-concept**. The fact that adults have lived longer, have interacted with more individuals, and have been buffeted or soothed by the realities of living crystallizes and reinforces their self-concept to the extent that they develop fairly rigid images of what they can or cannot do and, consequently, may seal off options for change.

Adults also have different problems. Pervasive psychological concerns include the following:

1. **Anxiety about upcoming transitions**. Fear of the unknown is common among adults as they face major changes in their lives. Perception of the change as negative increases the probability of anxiety, feelings of threat, and discomfort.

2. **Misgivings about leaving the present stage in life**. Adults usually desire comfort, and leaving the known can be a bittersweet time for many adults as they realize with nostalgia and sadness that the wheel of time is turning.

3. **Reality shock**. Even when a transition occurs smoothly, the new stage may contain unanticipated negative side effects, particularly for adults who have fantasized the new stage in glowing terms disproportionate to actuality. The reality of the change can cause disappointment and/or unhappiness.

4. **Compound stress**. Even psychologically secure individuals may require help if they experience a number of stressful occurrences without time to recover in between.

5. **Arrested development**. Fluid movement from one stage of life to the next requires an individual to have worked through earlier developmental stages successfully. When this gradual process of growth and maturation is blocked for whatever reason, progress to the next stage is also impeded, and the adult may be unable to achieve the self-direction and self-responsibility for fulfillment.

6. **Midlife malaise**. As adults enter midlife, they may experience a sense of vague unease and restlessness. They examine their past, their progress, and their potential for the future and may want to imbue their lives with more meaning. During this time some adults may make drastic changes, as they reflect on the unrealized dreams of their youth.

There are also problems unique to adults in accomplishing the transition of returning to school.

1. **Fear**. Some of these fears include anxiety about being able to learn, being afraid of failing, worry that they have been away from the educational scene too long, fear of competition, fear that they won't "fit in."

2. **Traditional teaching modes**. Because adults have developed skills in self-direction and independence, they are apt to resist traditional teaching methods such as lectures or rote learning. Adults need to know <u>why</u>.

3. **Impracticality and irrelevance of learning tasks**. Older persons generally seek to acquire new skills or knowledge out of needs related to ongoing

developmental tasks. They want to learn only what they find useful in their present circumstances.

4. **Unrealistic expectations**. The time required to achieve desired educational goals may be longer than anticipated, or the goals may be unclear in the adult's mind. Initial lack of skill or the hard work required in study can be frustrating or threatening to adults.

5. **Inadequate educational background**. Adults may never have learned how to study or read well, and for them to re-enter school takes a great deal of courage, determination, and motivation.

6. **Unnecessary red tape**. Adults want to be spared the boredom of standing in lines, filling out forms, or taking a physical examination. They can easily become impatient and be tempted to withdraw from such unpleasant experiences.

7. **Value conflicts**. Culture shock can be very real when people with fairly rigid values encounter current life styles and ways of behaving. The art of understanding and valuing the opinions of others is a skill many adults need to learn.

The compelling evidence that development occurs throughout the life process and that adulthood is not synonymous with stability and decline allows us to state categorically that resources and potential for growth exist at all ages. Certain transitions are characteristic of practically all adults: occupational transitions from first job to growth on the job to new jobs to retirement; marriage, including divorce and remarriage, parenthood and step-parenthood, surrogate parenthood, the empty nest, concern for grown children, concern for parents; shift in time perspective as adults relate their development to cues received from changes in their physical selves, their careers, and their families, as they shift in time perspective from future-oriented to past-oriented; and changes in self-concept related to environmental changes. The transition itself is not the issue. What is critical is the response of the person, the emotions aroused by the transition, the effect on estimates of personal worth and self-esteem. Resolving life transitions successfully means coming to terms with the feelings engendered by change, regrouping, setting new goals, and moving forward with new confidence and renewed strength into the different future.

Three factors appear to be key to stress-free or stress-minimized response to transitions:

1. **Anticipation of the transition**. When a forthcoming transition is expected, individuals have a chance to begin the process of preparing for it, to alter gradually their

attitudes and behaviors, knowingly or unknowingly, and thus lessen the possible debilitating effects of its impact.

2. **Opportunity to prepare for the transition.** Preparing for whatever change is imminent serves to temper reactions and ease the movement from one developmental period to another.

3. **Willingness to prepare for the transition.** Many individuals fend off change through a process of rationalization, distortion, or denial. This keeps them fixated at an earlier stage and makes the reality of the change, when it does occur, much more traumatic.

Counselor Areas of Contribution

How, then, can we as counselors be of most help to our adult clients as they enter the next decade of inevitable and increasing change?

First, we can help adults develop the mind-sense that change and transition are continuing and inevitable and that preparing themselves to cope effectively with transition can make life smoother and more rewarding. We can help them assess more accurately the transitions they are likely to experience, the probable sequence in which they will occur, image themselves in the new situation, and practice alternative strategies for responding to the change—all of which will lead the adult to more self-managed and goal-directed behavior.

Second, we can intensify outreach efforts that will help overcome any negative bias toward counseling—the idea that seeking help is not an admission of weakness.

Third, we can help them overcome the feeling of not being in control, a frequent concomitant to change, by helping them acquire the coping skills of decision-making, goal-setting, career planning, and the like. To feel out of control can be devastating, and we need to help them maintain or regain their sense of power.

Fourth, we can emphasize the opportunity for growth provided by the transition—the fact that a midlife crisis of some sort can be the precursor of a new, more rewarding life style based on a revised self-concept and enhanced understanding of available opportunities.

Next, we can help them understand the developmental imperative that exists within all of us—the urge that is like a demand from within, compelling us to change. We can help

adults realize the source of their vague unease or dissatisfaction and selectively accept or reject new patterns of behavior and bind them together into a coherent lifestyle.

And last, we can assist individuals to resist the formidable pressures for role conformity that exist during the adult years, the experience of "foreclosure" which occurs when the person accedes to the demand for settling into a prescribed role rather than experiencing autonomous growth. Such individuals may receive external praise and rewards for their conformity, but they pay the price of foregoing their potential for growing and becoming.

To date, adult counseling as a profession has not fully developed time-tested approaches or adequately met its responsibility to offer quality services, although in many settings wonderful things are happening. But there is much reason for hope. Research about adult transitions is growing, universities are developing adult counselor education programs in which bright and able people are enrolling, consensus is developing among educators as to requisite competencies for adult counselors, and, most important, public interest in and support for adult counseling are growing stronger.

We can only hope that out of these trends will develop a vital force for aiding adult development, helping adults manage the process of transition with equanimity. The 1990s will witness the need for implementing a comprehensive network of adult counseling centers and programs across the country that will furnish help for anyone who needs it. It is possible that in the 1990s adult counselors will be in demand and that adult counseling will become a natural concomitant of healthy living, enabling each individual to create a life that will bring the highest degree of personal meaning and dignity.

Technology, Computers, and Counselors

The computer is an invention of unparalleled significance. Of the several innovations in the last decade that have been heralded as having the power to change how we live, probably none has the potential of the computer to affect every facet of our lives, including education. Certainly part of the reason for the tremendous impact of the computer on education is the time of its arrival. Currently, the academic world is under attack from dissatisfied constituencies who are demanding that students acquire more from their schooling.

The clamor for the computerization of education is becoming a din. Yet even while computers are being assimilated into the educational enterprise, some people are decrying both their potential and their use. The difficulty in knowing whether school systems will be able to use computers to change and enhance the learning process is compounded by the fact that the real development and contribution of computers is only now emerging. It has been said that the computational powers equivalent to those of present-day super computers will be available in a micro-process system for under one hundred dollars by 1990. Clearly, any discussion about the role of the counselor with computers needs to focus not on present activities or past experience but on possible and probable developments for computers and their influence on counseling and human services in the near future.

Characteristics of Computers and Technology

Four characteristics of computers and technology will have significant effect on their adoption and use. These are listed below.

Generation of both positive and negative outcomes. Computers will create new opportunities to counsel differently and better and to perform counseling functions that have not been feasible in the past. But while the computer makes possible the achievement of new goals, some loss in the achievement of former goals may occur, e.g., greater opportunity to examine pertinent information may result in less one-to-one counselor/client interaction. The same technology and process will bring about both the gain and the loss.

Increased visibility of conflicts between choices and values. Using computers in counseling forces program developers to delineate clearly their values and goals. In this process people may recognize greater conflicts than were apparent when the criteria were not sharply defined. In traditional counseling settings individual counselors have operated independently, and conflicts, if they existed, could be ignored or allowed to exist without much attention or fuss. The introduction of computers into a counseling program dramatizes the need to make hard decisions about values and outcomes.

The duality of depersonalization and individualization. Today we are sensitive to technology's potential to become the master rather than the servant. The very thought of such mechanistic processes entering the realm of human interactions convinces many that the survival of the individual as an existential being is possible only by opposing the adoption and use of computers. Human beings do, however, have the capacity to mediate and control the use of technology to serve their best interests. Furthermore, there

is increasing evidence that in our complex world only technology can preserve and make possible the freedom and rights of humankind that we cherish so dearly.

The influence of the social setting. The social setting for the computer has a strong influence on whether or not, to what extent, and in what ways the benefits of the computer will be realized. It is undesirable, even dangerous, either to discuss the usefulness of a computer without reference to the setting in which it is to be used or to generalize about the usefulness of computers from one setting to another. The computer, as a component in a highly variable social setting, is ungeneralizable because it both shapes and is shaped by the particular program in which it is used, the school or agency where it is located, or the larger community. However unsophisticated our knowledge is about computer-assisted counseling, our knowledge about how to adopt and implement computer-assisted counseling in different counseling and human services programs is even more primitive.

New and Emerging Counselor Roles in Using Computers

Systematic exploration and use of computers. No role for counselors in using computers is easily generalizable or clear-cut. The level, the setting, and the particular program culture will determine how the computer can be used most effectively and what outcomes will accrue. Therefore, an essential first step for counselors in defining their role will be practical experience with a variety of strategies and procedures.

Counselors can begin immediately to explore possible computer applications and use in two areas: computer-managed counseling, which assists counselors with the clerical and administrative tasks associated with their work; and computer-assisted counseling, an interactive counseling technique in which the computer is used to present information, elicit and monitor responses, and select and present additional information in accordance with individual client needs. Exploring and trying out CMC and CAC will help counselors discover ways to reduce the time they devote to repetitive, monotonous tasks that the computer can perform better.

An active stance for quality assurance. Many people are inclined to judge the quality of a computer program by the complexity and quantity of the hardware. In fact, program effectiveness is more a function of quality and appropriateness of the software than of expense or quantity of computers. A vital counselor role, then, is to make a quality assurance review of all software to be used.

Evaluation of the use of computers. Counselors must be committed to gathering specific data about what computers do or do not do to achieve significant outcomes. Although research has revealed positive outcomes from computer-assisted counseling, the actual contribution of computers to counseling must be determined separately in each program. If counselors fail to evaluate their programs, it is likely that others will do it for them, and most likely from a non-objective and possibly hostile perspective.

Computers as an indiscriminate discriminator: A commitment to equity. Because client response to computers is not universally positive, special efforts to minimize anxieties and to clarify false assumptions about computers is necessary if all clients are to benefit from their use. It is a major responsibility of counselors to attend to initial attitudinal and experiential differences to ensure that they do not keep certain individuals or groups from profiting from the counseling process.

A systematic adoption and implementation process. Evident in the computer adoption procedures in many counseling programs is the lack of an orderly and systematic process. Bleuer and Walz's seven-step model for developing and implementing a high-tech counseling program emphasizes the need for customizing the computer to the particular goals and needs of a given human services program.

Exploration into new uses of the computer. Several avenues exist by which counselors may use computers to enhance the scope of counseling and the quality of counseling outcomes. A few of these are (a) tutoring—providing individualized instruction in an area in which a client is experiencing difficulty; (b) diagnosis—helping the client and/or counselor determine the nature of a difficulty and its probable causes; (c) game technologies—using a game format and life-like simulations to help people explore different behaviors in a nonthreatening environment; and (d) networks—electronically linking persons geographically removed from one another, through the use of a computer telephone modem and a communications network service (e.g., The Source or CompuServe), to enable interaction on topics of mutual interest.

Counselor Role Priorities

The addition of computers to a human services program does not guarantee that the program will be either more efficient or more effective. Several considerations are paramount in redefining the counselor's role vs. the computer.

1. Because there is a real danger that we will automate the status quo, doing what we do with more pizzazz or labor-saving techniques, we must look to the creative redesign of counseling. We need to use computers to assess the soundness of our counseling strategies and to determine how we may better achieve our goals, using the computer.

2. We must define our developmental efforts as a joint enterprise, individuals working together as a team—clients, counselors, parents, community members—to design programs that meet joint needs.

3. The uncertainties regarding the use of computers in counseling means that we must consider broad-term effects of computers on students, parents, and the counseling process. Vital to the new counselor role is a willingness to observe, identify, and assess behaviors associated with computers, on the part of those who provide them and those who use them.

4. Dialogue is a particularly meaningful way for students to learn, especially when followed by practice. This suggests a learning model not unlike typical counseling interactions, which can become an exciting opportunity for counselors to influence educational processes, leading toward discovery learning and individual planning and decision making. Counselors may be in a position to expand their influence in areas far wider than the traditional counseling realm.

The computer offers a new vision for counselors—the opportunity not only to do better what they do now but to redefine what counseling is and how it is delivered. The ultimate effectiveness of tomorrow's counselors will depend somewhat on advances in the development of technology, both hardware and software, but most of all on personware—the attitudes and feelings of counselors about the adoption of a powerful new tool. It will require their giving up some of what they have done well in order to take on new means and goals. The most important new role for counselors in the use of computers may well be a sense of creative risk-taking that encourages, stimulates, and models for clients a change in viewpoint regarding the counseling experience.

Demographic Trends and Their Impact on Counseling

Significant changes in the numbers and types of the world's people will have a strong impact on the counseling profession in the years ahead. These changes can be viewed from several perspectives:

1. **Culturally different groups.** In a world in which 75% of the total population is of color, we perhaps need to redefine the words 'majority' and 'minority.' One way to do this is to examine some statistics regarding America. By 1990 in the U.S. alone 25% of the total population will be minority. In our school population 25% is already of minority origin, and the percentage of Blacks, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and Native Americans continues to grow. Hispanics are the fastest growing segment of our population because they have the highest birth rate. This has great significance for schools because the Spanish-speaking population is younger than other populations, with a median age of 22.1, contrasted with 24.9 for Blacks and 31.3 for Whites. The movement of minority groups into urban areas has soared inexorably, as witnessed by these changes in 23 of our 25 largest school systems:

1950 - 10% minority
1960 - 33% minority
1970 - 50% minority
1980 - 70% minority
2000 - 90% minority (prediction)

2. **Urban growth.** The World Future Society predicts that by the year 2000, 52% of the world's people will reside in urban centers—and that number may leap to 90% by the end of the 21st century. Again, we can see the tremendous significance this will have for schools, and for counselors.

3. **Family status.** In most families now both parents are working, a dramatic increase from 1950, when 60% of families had a working father, to 1985, when only 7% of two-parent families had just one employed parent. Since the 1960s the 'me generation' lifestyles have postponed marriage, slashed the birth rate, sent the divorce rate soaring, and moved millions of young women into the labor force. The number of children from broken families continues to grow, despite the fact that people are having fewer children. Reverberations throughout society from these jolts to the family unit can be seen in employment settings, where more attention and compassion are being given to maternity leaves and family responsibilities, where there are shorter work weeks and flex-time; in the rapid rise of child-care facilities; in shuttered schoolrooms across the country; in the rise of Big Brother and Big Sister and Foster Grandparent groups; in the need of rootless children and adults for wise counseling and direction.

4. **Age changes.** Wide-ranging changes are occurring at the upper end of the age spectrum. We are an aging population, and the 'gray power' phenomenon will be of

increasing significance in the decade ahead. From 1900 to 2050, the U.S. population will have grown from 76 million to 309 million. Within that group the ratio of those under 65 to those 65 and older will shrink dramatically from 24:1 to 4:1. In the U.S., even in 1983, there were more people 65 and over than there were teenagers. In 1940 the ratio of workers to retirees was 10:1; in 1980 it was 3:1; and it is predicted that in the year 2000, it will be 2:1—with a negative ratio occurring by 2010 or 2020. The generation of people aged 65 and older are at the head of a profound demographic shift, a generation-wide transformation in health and wealth and attitudes. And this process will accelerate further in 2010, the magic year when the baby boom of the 1950s begins to turn 65. Those people 65 and over live longer than ever before, with those 85 and older in the fastest-growing group; they are richer than the elderly have ever been; they are staying healthy longer; and more and more adults of all ages are returning to school. Although critical problems do remain, especially in regard to financial security, the elderly are astoundingly better off than they were 20 years ago by any standard one wants to measure—not just by longevity, but by years of independent, active, mentally alert life, disposable income, housing, and health care.

These demographic changes that continue to alter the racial, regional, and age composition of the western world's populations present both problems and opportunities. In no sphere will the influence of these demographic trends be felt more strongly than in the schools. Civilized nations have a transcendent stake in improving the educational opportunities for minorities and thus the quality of urban school systems, and a high level of educational commitment is necessary. We know that the rapid increase in minority groups is here to stay and that the barriers of color, language, culture, and attitudes will be greater than any faced before. As the number of minority groups grows, their members will constitute an increasingly significant segment of society. The task will be not to lower standards but to increase our efforts. Counselors will need to become highly skilled in cross-cultural counseling if we are to give this new generation of people the best chance. To do so will be to the direct benefit of all of society, because if they do not succeed, we will all have diminished futures.

Schools will need to stay open longer and provide an even wider range of educational opportunities than they do now to accommodate the inrush of adults who need updating of their present level of expertise, who wish to change careers and need complete retraining, or who simply wish to take advantage of their increased leisure time to acquire new skills and knowledge in vocational or avocational pursuits. More counselors will be needed who

are skillful in assisting adults with life career decisions of all kinds. Adult counseling will become an important focus in counselor preparation programs because of the increasing numbers of older people who require services. Building upon the self-help movement, the coming years should witness expansion in the number and the availability of packaged resources, probably in modular form, designed to facilitate the acquisition of personal competencies—learning packages that can be linked to home computers and VCR's, with trained counselors helping adults to tailor the learning to their own learning style.

Thus, we see more demand in the 1990s for minority counselors, for adult counselors, especially in the older age ranges, and for family counselors, professionals who are prepared in advance to provide the services needed in our changing world.

Marketing

Many counselors believe that the profession has the power to determine its own future. There is another point of view that growth services of the future will be those that respond to the marketing forces that shape our society. While it is clear that much of what we would describe as marketing is inappropriate to the helping services, some basic marketing concepts deserve greater attention and interest from human services specialists. This is especially true as the competition for available resources becomes increasingly intense. The services which best understand and utilize market forces and strategies are those that will prosper and be most useful to individuals and society as a whole.

Product and Service Life Cycle

Basic to marketing is the concept that every product or service progresses through a predictable life cycle of introduction to abandonment. Regardless of the length of the life cycle, the stages are the same.

Stage 1. Introduction. When the product is new and has few competitors, the role of marketing is to build demand by informing potential users of the existence and desirability of the product or service.

Stage 2. Growth. Here there is a shift from building mass demand for the product to stimulating selective demand, to identifying and communicating why a given product or service is better and more effective than another.

Stage 3. Maturity. When competition becomes strong, it is important to stress the differences between products or services and to identify new uses for them.

Stage 4. Decline. In the reduction of the use of the product, costs remain high because of the efforts expended in marketing it. The key decision at this point is to abandon the product or service, since attempts to retain or revise it can be extremely expensive and detrimental to the overall effectiveness of the producer.

Major Challenges in the Service Life Cycle

If we adopt the life cycle concept in our view of products and services, we will need to respond to two specific challenges. First, because each life cycle stage requires a different marketing strategy, we must adapt the means of presenting the product or service to the public. Second, we need to find new products or services that will replace those that are declining or ready to be dropped.

The Use of Marketing Concepts in Counseling and the Human Services

Several powerful forces today are placing the human services in an increasingly competitive and vulnerable position. Among the more important ones are self-help books, self-help networks, entry of other helping services into areas previously served by counselors, and availability of technologically-based services. As these forces impact upon counseling, we must be able to respond effectively. We may either do this proactively, demonstrating our desire and ability to meet people's needs, or continue to resist the life cycles of our services, thereby risking abandonment or extinction.

Major Relevant Marketing Concepts

The following are ways of applying marketing concepts to counseling, thereby strengthening counseling and human services.

1. We need to know our audience and potential consumers and their needs, undertaking a regular program to assess the nature of our publics and their interests.

2. It is a crucial responsibility to introduce new services in response to changing needs of our constituencies, a process that is likely to be costly and difficult. The majority of new ideas are unsuccessful; therefore, we must be prepared to experiment with new ideas and approaches, expecting that most of them will fail.

3. Success appears to be more a function of managerial skills and expertise in marketing programs and services than of the amount of money devoted to research and development. If a counseling program is not successful, the answer may be that it needs to be better managed by individuals who are keenly aware of the real needs and concerns of those being served.

4. The single most important factor contributing to new product or service success is uniqueness and superiority. We need to identify how our services are unique and why they are superior to others.

5. We need to use the service life cycle in anticipating and planning for both problems and opportunities, observing changes in our population subgroups as to needs and interests, and making appropriate changes in how we present, prescribe, and provide counseling.

6. Synergistic interface means combining a stable product or service with new information or technological changes. Adding technology to counseling extends its capabilities and use and probably also increases interest and use by new and different groups.

7. A successful marketing plan is geared to developing new markets and new users: new uses of an existing service, new users of an existing service, and new reasons or reasons for using the service. Emphasis on the new use of a service has many advantages over developing a new service, not the least of which is development and marketing costs.

A Marketing List for Counselors

To improve the marketing of counseling and human services, counselors can do countless things that have the potential to increase significantly public knowledge about and use of counseling services. The bottom line, however, is not how much counselors do but how well they target their efforts and deliver on their "targets of opportunity." The following are specific recommendations for enhancing the image of human services and increasing their use.

1. Take a positive attitude toward using marketing concepts and strategies in disseminating knowledge about counseling services.

2. Define what excellence and quality are in human services.

3. Respond to competition from other sources of service by extolling the uniqueness and superiority of counseling services.

4. Work for the judicious infusion of technology into counseling.

5. Be sensitive to special client needs that are particularly responsive to counselor interventions.

6. Develop an appropriate marketing strategy for each stage of development in the counseling program.

7. Make a strong and ongoing commitment to the research and development of new programs and practices.

8. Maximize the building of synergistic interfaces.

9. Regularly and systematically assess user and potential user needs and interests.

10. Act decisively to terminate unhealthy and ineffective products and services.

Traditionally, counselors have functioned with little regard for how their potential clients perceived them or for ways to inform potential users of the benefits of counseling. They seem to have assumed implicitly that inevitably the "truth" about the value of counseling would prevail and that its users and supporters would progressively increase.

To the contrary, several decades after its inception, counseling is till struggling to gain the understanding and acceptance of its publics. Now more than ever before it is essential that counselors recognize and accept the responsibility of marketing their services. The alternative is to allow services of lesser quality or usefulness to prosper while counseling withers in the shade of more astutely marketed competition.

Stress Management

There is no question that stress pervades our lives in the 1980s. The catchwords in today's society—faster, bigger, better, more efficient—are simply harbingers of what is ahead as we strive increasingly to keep up with technology and the rapid rate of change. In an attempt to balance the demands of our jobs and our personal lives, we jog, change our diets and join health clubs to keep fit and relieve tension; we gulp antacids and gobble pills to quell our uneasy stomaches and soothe our spirits. The expanding amount of literature designed to help people cope with stress attests to the widespread concern being given to the impact of this disabling disease, and we have no reason to believe that it will abate. Rather, we expect that it will mount, and that the high cost of stress in the work environment—absenteeism, high rate of turnover, burnout—and in people's personal

lives—heart disease, stomach problems, and other psychosomatic illnesses—will be even more critical in the 1990s.

Stress is not all bad. Hans Selye, the eminent Canadian physician who devoted his working life to the study of this problem, distinguished between distress: bad stress, stress that causes anxiety, poor health, or chronic illness—and eustress: good stress that invigorates and motivates, what Selye called the "spice of life." Several of his findings are important to a basic understanding of stress, which, of course, is fundamental to the ability to manage stress.

First, whether the stressful event is pleasurable or painful, it will produce the same physiological and psychological reactions within the person, a response Selye labeled the General Adaptation Syndrome, or GAS. This consists of three stages—alarm, resistance, and exhaustion.

Second, what may be distressful to one person may be exciting or challenging to another.

Third, the same event can be stressful at one time and distressful at another.

Fourth, whether an event causes distress or eustress depends upon the person's perception of the event or situation.

And finally, how we behave in a given situation is the product of a combination of factors: the environment, the magnitude of the stressor, what has gone before, a mental assessment of our ability to handle the stressor, our value system, our physical condition, and just plain habit. The important point here is that if we can learn to control how we respond to stress, we can modify our feelings and attitudes and decrease our vulnerability to stressful conditions.

To summarize, then, stress can best be understood as the product of interactions among three elements: the environment, the nature of the stressor, and the individual's vulnerability to stress.

Several recent studies have shown that the work environment is most often critical in the experience of stress among adults; one team of researchers found that educational administrators estimated that 75% of the stress they felt came from their jobs. Conditions of one's job and events related to work, then, become critical components of the stress syndrome.

We have all heard of the intense pressures in the corporate world; but only recently have leaders in academia begun to realize that negative stress prevails in their world as well. Research has shown that individuals engaged in the human services are more subject to

stress than workers in product-oriented occupations. And because teachers and counselors spend their lives in attempts to help other people, they are prime potential victims of stress. And those who come to learn do not escape unscathed. Increasingly we are realizing that students experience stress to a surprising degree.

Recent research has found that teachers' personal concerns could be classified into five categories: time, money, reputation, significance of what they do, and anxiety about the future.

A survey of over 2,000 students, the findings of which are supported by several other research studies, revealed that sources of student distress stemmed from problems associated with instruction, competition, organization of time, adjustment to college, administrative problems, social adjustment, finances, housing, and transportation. If one could make a single major generalization from the above, it would be that the most critical stressors for students have to do with the instructional process itself, the very thing for which students come to college in the first place.

On the assumption that stress is part of the human condition, and that it will continue to be so, and that, if anything, its effects will be exacerbated as the pace of life escalates, what can we do about it?

A prime target for stress is the faculty, and this includes all of those who work with students in the academic environment. For faculty members strategies for coping with stress can be classified into two major categories: preventative strategies and combative strategies.

Preventative strategies include the following:

1. Avoiding stressors through appropriate life adjustments.
2. Managing the expectations and demands made upon oneself.
3. Changing stress-inducing ways of behaving and responding.
4. Augmenting one's coping resources.

Combative strategies include the following:

1. Stress monitoring.
2. Marshalling personal resources.
3. Taking direct action either to eliminate or lessen the power of stressors.
4. Developing greater tolerance for stresses which cannot be eliminated.
5. Lowering stress arousal.

Faculty members can be instrumental in helping students deal with stress, and the following suggestions are offered in this regard:

1. Be explicit and extremely clear on expectations and responsibilities for students, and communicate these in such a way that students feel free to question and discuss the requirements.

2. Develop a positive, interactive relationship with students.

3. Adopt a distinct and defensible reward structure.

4. Assist students to acquire at least a modicum sense of control over their student roles.

5. Treat students as individuals rather than as a generalized whole.

6. Assist students to adopt and adapt the previously described stress coping strategies.

Faculty members are often unaware of the critical importance of their role in students' lives. Because stress reactions interfere with concentration and the ability to perform to best advantage, it would behoove those of us who assume leadership in instruction and academic advisement to be alert to symptoms of stress, to be aware of ways of helping students who appear to be suffering from stress, and, above all, to attempt to teach and counsel in ways that avoid stress arousal.

If faculty members can increase their understanding of stress and its potential for harm, if they can learn to recognize the symptoms of stress, if they can objectively examine their own personal sources of stress, if they can explore their own personal stress patterns and experiment with various coping strategies to determine what works best for themselves, then they can not only increase their own professional expertise and ability to manage stress but also be of real assistance to others, especially students, and thus contribute enormously to student satisfaction and success in the academic world.

The 1990s are likely to be even more stressful than the 1980s, but we have learned some very effective ways of coping with stress and turning it into a challenge rather than a threat. If we can acquaint ourselves with these strategies, then we should be able to ward off the disabling effects of stress, increase our personal satisfaction, and make the academic setting a vital and rewarding place for all who labor there.

Resource Resourcefulness

If counselors were to list the differing roles they play and the kinds of responsibilities they assume in their varying settings, the reader would be astonished. Because of their

particular understanding of student behavior, together with their ability to design programs that assist students with both their general development and schooling and their ability to deal with more immediate crises, counselors are frequently a first line of help. Often these counseling tasks and interventions are not by the counselor's choice; rather, they have been thrust upon the counselors by school administrators or community members who have had no other viable source to turn to. And many times these new roles or tasks come without warning and are ones for which counselors have not had the formal training that would enable them to deal with them effectively.

Among the more notable of these broadened areas of counselor responsibility are helping AIDS victims and their families, working with problems of violence and abuse, assisting schools in responding to racial tensions and confrontations, dealing broadly and specifically with sexual harassment, designing and introducing programs for the multiple forms of drug abuse, assisting individual drug users, helping both females and males involved with teenage pregnancy, and consulting with schools and students in improving student retention and dropout prevention. The list is only a sample, but even the enumeration of these few areas of concern documents the enormity and the variety of what counselors are called upon to do.

Counselors clearly have two choices in acceding to demands for greater use of their knowledge and expertise. One is to acknowledge the need but indicate that neither by training or responsibility are they in a position to act. Such a response on the part of counselors would be understandable given the myriad demands that are already made of them and their lack of time to deal with the many priorities with which they are already overburdened. A second response, and one that is probably more consonant with the caring nature of counselors, is to search for ways of reorganizing their time and duties so that they can be helpful. Though at first glance this might seem to be an impossible task, not unlike getting blood from the proverbial turnip, there are two roles which counselors can adopt which, while causing them either to give up or to change the nature of their current role and function, may ultimately increase their impact and their favorable influence upon student development.

1. **Self-renewal**. Most counselors endeavor to keep up to date on new ideas and developments in the profession which are relevant to their work. This in itself is a challenge. Most of us have short lives and long reading lists of journals and other useful resources which go unread and unapplied. While there is no easy solution to this dilemma of responding to increasing demands for service while trying to enhance one's own

knowledge and skills, it is clear that if counselors are to be viable both individually and as a professional group, they must give a real priority to self-renewal. In fact, just to maintain their competence in traditional specialties and responsibilities requires that counselors provide time for upgrading existing skills and acquiring new ones. Like personal fitness and health, counselors cannot afford not to devote the time necessary to enhance their psychological and professional knowledge and vitality.

2. **Counselors as knowledge brokers.** As people today are increasingly taking personal responsibility for their own development and wellness and relying less on others for help, counselors are in the vanguard of those who can provide information and assistance as to strategies that can be used or additional sources of information that are available. In this role, counselors are truly knowledge brokers, individuals who by their own knowledge and expertise in areas related to human development can help other staff and parents design self-help programs and refer them to other sources of information which will help them to be successful in these programs. As a broker, the counselor has the opportunity to intervene in very direct and useful ways with large numbers of people, but is able to save the time necessary for long-term counseling with individuals. For many students and adults, the need is not for the extended time of the counselor; rather, it is to help them clarify their needs, to point them in the right direction, and to make them aware of the resources available to help them self-manage their development. More so than anyone in the educational sphere, counselors both by knowledge and disposition are ideally suited to perform this role.

While these two roles of self-renewal and knowledge broker may be attractive to counselors, the most immediate question that is likely to be raised is how can this be done. As one counselor put it, "I didn't go into counseling to be a librarian, to spend my time helping others find the information they need." Admittedly, these new roles and responsibilities are difficult, but in many ways they are neither as new nor as difficult as they may seem. In many areas such as career guidance and career counseling, counselors have helped students and other clients to acquire the information they needed to make wise educational and occupational choices and plans. In this capacity, they have frequently functioned not as providers of the information per se, but have helped clients learn how to use it. We believe that the counselors of the 1990s, by being resourceful, will become knowledgeable about and comfortable with the use of national databases such as ERIC. When utilized regularly and systematically, these national databases enable counselors not only to renew themselves with fresh ideas and approaches but also to expand their personal

knowledge reservoir so that they can be of real assistance to staff, parents, and students. By linkage with larger educational centers, they can frequently plan their efforts so as to enjoy ongoing benefit from the expertise of these educational facilities. Additionally, the advent of new developments such as ERIC After Dark, which enables counselors to search the ERIC database with their own personal computers, reduces the time needed and increases the availability of methods by which counselors can renew and update their knowledge. With this direct access capability to national databases, counselors can deal more spontaneously and rigorously with staff and client questions as they arise, and develop strategies and responses which reflect the most relevant and authoritative experience and research.

Counselors are increasingly viewed as a first-line resource for school needs and urgent tasks. As a result, they have to become resource resourceful—they need to keep their own knowledge and skills up to date at the same time they are assisting students and staff to manage their own development in the most effective manner. A prime resource for counselors as they assume these new roles is the national databases such as ERIC, and more specifically, the ERIC Counseling and Personnel Services Clearinghouse, which packages important and relevant information for counselors on high-priority client needs and interests. By becoming knowledgeable about ERIC and skillful in its use, counselors will truly become resource resourceful and greatly extend their capacity to be helpful to both the student and the school.

Change Agentry

Change agentry involves much more than simply responding or reacting to change; rather, it means having the ability to make change happen in a systematic, planned fashion. Change is a word that symbolizes our world today and will certainly be typical of the decade ahead. By its very definition, counseling is a change-oriented profession: one that helps clients to change ways of behaving, to set different and more realistic goals, to process past data to make wise decisions for a changing future. Counselors are an inherently powerful group who, of all the educational staff, are in a position to assess the impact of the system on its members, to note what is going well and what is creating dissatisfaction; and they can be a force for productive, far-reaching change if they have the skills and knowledge and motivation to do so.

There is a strong rationale for urging counselors to adopt actively the role of change agent:

1. **To stop being a dumping ground for tasks nobody else wants to do.** Acting only at the initiative of others demeans the counseling role. To avoid having counseling functions become a composite of left-overs, counselors need to act, to plan, to establish priorities according to identified client and system needs.

2. **To recognize when the system is sick and work toward needed change.** Problem behaviors in clients may in reality be strengths—indicating that clients are justifiably unwilling to accept system demands. Counselors can spot cues that the system is ailing and take steps to help provide a remedy.

3. **To avoid being victims of unilateral top-down decisions.** When top administrators make all the decisions, they have either been allowed to do so or have found that other approaches were not satisfactory. Counselors skilled in change agentry can be welcome collaborators in planning and implementing change, and, as a positive by-product, can insure that any contemplated changes will be consonant with the needs of the guidance component within the institution.

4. **To translate turbulent times into positive moves toward change.** Outbreaks of dissatisfaction or discontent with what is can make people receptive to different ways of doing things. Rather than ride the bitchy bandwagon, the skillful counselor will see the tremendous potential for innovation inherent in the uproar and use the situation to advantage in working toward needed change.

5. **To become more creative in utilizing existing material and human resources.** Counselors who attribute their ineffectiveness to not having enough—enough money or secretarial help or resources or staff—come to think of their difficulties as somebody else's problem. Change-oriented counselors will abandon the complaint of having too little, too few, or too many, and will find innovative ways of dealing with the present and the possible.

6. **To enhance their potential as role models.** Counselors who are identified as involved, proactive, and committed to working toward productive change in themselves and the environment model for their clients ways to change themselves and their own life space.

Over the span of a lifetime every person develops some kind of strategy to deal with problems involving change. Some take a "do nothing" stance, believing that if they just relax, whatever it is that is causing discomfort or disturbance will go away. Others act

reflexively, without thought of outcomes, responding to immediate pressures. Others set goals, organize an action plan to achieve the goals, but wind up short of the target, wondering what went wrong. One of the main reasons why change efforts fail is that those who are trying to implement the change are unfamiliar with the change process. They have not followed a rational model for accomplishing change that takes into account the dynamics of change, the stages through which clients move as they respond to change efforts, and the steps necessary to make change occur.

Several years ago the authors became very interested in change agentry and condensed and adapted concepts from several sources into a succinct, step-by-step approach that, from experience, we believe can be a useful guide to those who would be innovators in counseling and student services. It is presented here briefly to illustrate the various stages of the change process which change agents should be aware of and give attention to.

1. **Establishing the need.** For change to occur, a need must surface—a feeling of inefficiency or deficiency, a complaint, some feeling of frustration, a desire for something new or different. This can be accomplished by means of a needs assessment; an opinion survey; interviews with decision makers; a search of existing statistics regarding numbers of clients served, client outcomes, or types of clients; imaging optimum services; or studying other programs.

2. **Building interactive relationships.** After a need is identified, the change agent must try to establish a good working relationship with the people the person is trying to help. Efforts to change or innovate will almost always encounter obstacles or resistance, and a strong, open relationship has the potential for overcoming even the most formidable blocks. On the other hands, the simplest kind of change attempt can founder if relationships are poor. For changes of any significant magnitude, the change agents will usually gather together a team of people representative of various groups whom the change will affect—and much could be said about the kinds of people to be included. Suffice it here to state that team members should be chosen with care.

3. **Assessing.** Assessing is a systematic attempt to diagnose the situation, to specify what needs to be or should be changed to respond to the need—identifying the problems and the strengths and the goals of the system; identifying resources; learning about the reward structure; finding out about communication among people, groups, departments; determining whether there is an organized structure for working toward planned goals; and preparing a diagnostic inventory of the findings.

4. **Generating options.** The change agent team will have to decide how much money, time, and energy they wish to devote to developing alternative courses of action—too many will take too much time and may inundate the team; too few will restrict the avenues of change, limit the choices available, stifle creativity, and create a forced-choice situation. The team must balance the importance of the change effort and the eventual goals of the project with their investment in it.

5. **Deciding.** This is, of course, the most important step of all, and the most exciting in many ways. Involved here are comparing one alternative with another, weighing costs, accessibility of materials, benefits to the client system, possible negative side effects, amount of staff development training required, compatibility with the system, ease of infusion into ongoing activities—in other words, carefully examining the potential rewards of the change to the people, the program, the institution, the system. Deciding also means making a commitment.

6. **Facilitating adoption and implementation.** In this stage the change agent team finds out whether the chosen solution is indeed workable and acceptable to members of the system. Individuals go through six phases in making a decision to adopt an innovation: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, adoption, and integration. And they all move at different speeds: Hurrying through the process does not allow people enough time to think things through clearly; skipping steps may cause resistance. Change agents need to choose their methods of communication regarding the change very carefully, they need to be aware of who are the formal or informal leaders of the groups to be affected by the change, and they need to be flexible in adapting or altering their plan or strategy as they gather more data about people's reactions to the innovation.

7. **Refining and renewing.** The job is not over when the change has been installed. The temptation to sit back and breathe a sigh of relief must be resisted. As people gain experience from the trial of the innovation, there may be need for modification, for refining ways of operating. And as populations and needs change, there should be a conscious planned effort to review and evaluate outcomes. The renewal procedure may reveal that all is going well and the program is achieving its goals; on the other hand, it may show that changing circumstances have caused the program to become obsolete, no longer responsive to existing attitudes or needs. The final goal of the renewing process is for the client or the system to have the capacity and skills for self-renewal, i.e., to have a positive attitude toward change, training in change agent skills, interest in actively searching for outside resources, and commitment to planning for the future.

Being a successful change agent requires first, then, that the person operate from a systematic approach. Beyond that, several behaviors have great impact on promoting change: (a) willingness to do research and gain knowledge power, (b) putting time limits on a trial adoption of an innovation, (c) keeping a low profile, (d) keeping a broad or systems point of view, (e) being committed and willing to stay with the system, and (f) being very sensitive to when is the right time to act.

In discussing this issue, the focus has been on *how* change can occur. *What* the change should be is an entirely different issue. But it is a truism that what we decide to do is influenced both implicitly and explicitly by what we believe we are able to do. If we have a heady sense of our own strength and capacity to effect change, we will feel emboldened to select goals and objectives that challenge us. If we feel empowered, we will be able to create the best kind of future for our clients, our profession, and ourselves. Becoming a change agent is a significant step in that creative process.

Personal Empowerment

Contemporary individuals have grown less reliant on institutions and expert advice and are more inclined today to depend upon their own capacities to deal successfully with major life challenges. The unreliability of some so-called experts and care-givers and the scandals associated with their behavior and services have lent further encouragement to the self-help movement. Personal empowerment is the perceptions and behaviors identified with people who have the inner strength and resources to control and manage the problems and pressures they experience in life. Such individuals look to themselves for the wherewithal to become who it is they would be, rather than expect what they need to be forthcoming from others. To a large extent, personal empowerment characterizes individuals whose self-esteem has helped them become self-actualized, who are actively involved in setting appropriate goals for themselves, and who harness their own personal resources, as well as those about them, to achieve important ends in their lives.

Characteristics of Self-Empowered Persons

The following attributes characterize generally the individual who manifests a sense of personal empowerment:

1. **They have a strong belief in self.** High self-esteem or an innate sense of personal worth is typical of the self-empowered person. Such individuals feel confident about meeting new challenges and venturing into new or unknown areas. This feeling of self-worth permeates all of their actions and makes them personally effective. Without a healthy self-concept, even though individuals may devote considerable time and attention to a variety of tasks, they are likely to be less effective and less successful.

2. **They establish meaningful and achievable goals.** Personally empowered individuals are constantly scanning their world, deciding what it is they need to do or want to do. They have an agenda. They are clear about what is important to themselves and in what areas and what ways they wish to be involved and to contribute. Their goals are important both to themselves and to the environment in which they work, and ones that offer a reasonable chance of successful achievement. Establishing these goals is an ongoing process. As they approach completion of specific goals, they are thinking ahead and planning for their next set of goals and deciding how they can build on and enhance previous successes and achievements. In a broad sense, their goals coalesce into a meaningful, personal life mission, which gives them the motivation and energy to effect change and improvement in their own lives and in the world about them.

3. **They assume moderate risks.** Personally empowered people are neither wild nor timid. They are prepared to meet challenges and take on responsibilities for which there is no assured successful outcome. They weigh probable outcomes, however, and move forward only on risks in which they feel they will have a moderate chance of success, where it is not fantasy to expect that if their reasoning is appropriate, they can be winners. To reject all risks is to wait so long to act that important opportunities may be lost. Risk-taking also adds an element of zest and dynamism to the lives of personally empowered persons and escalates their ability to manage what at an earlier time might seem to have been insurmountable challenges.

4. **They assume responsibility for their own actions and their consequences.** People can be divided generally into two groups—those who regard what happens to them primarily as a function of their own actions, and those who believe that what occurs is primarily the result of chance, outside of themselves or beyond their own control. Personally empowered individuals have a strong locus of self-control, a belief that by their own actions they can play a significant role in their own personal destiny. Belief in their ability to manage and control their future leads self-empowered people to be more thoughtful regarding their own behavior and to look consistently for

ways of avoiding difficulties or problems that they have encountered in the past. By lodging responsibility for what happens to them within themselves, they assume greater personal responsibility for avoiding mistakes and problems. Such individuals can be truly described as self-correcting—as they experience difficulties they come to understand better why they occurred, and they adopt behaviors which help them to avoid similar problems in the future. This self-correctional mode is very instrumental in helping them habitually to draw success from failure, as they view each failure as a useful lesson for improving and enhancing future behavior.

5. **They form networks with significant others.** No person has within himself or herself all the knowledge and skills needed to cope with all of the tasks and challenges he or she may experience. However competent people are, they are likely to be confronted with new situations or reconfronted with old situations for which their responses are neither as adequate or as up to date as they would like them to be. By networking with other individuals who possess knowledge and skills beyond their own regarding particular topics or situations, people are able to utilize and act upon others' expertise and thus expand their personal strength. Personally empowered individuals proactively build networks, adding to them individuals with knowledge and skills from which they can profit as they encounter future challenges and problems. These networks are usually mutually beneficial as members of the network share their history in meeting and responding to life challenges.

Counselor Opportunities and Responsibilities

Counselors can help individuals to increase their personal empowerment in the following ways. They can assist individuals to:

1. **Assess their own power and competence.** An important first step for people desiring to become self-empowered is to make a self-inventory of the extent to which they possess the characteristics of personally empowered individuals. This assessment enables them to know where their strengths lie and what their developmental needs are. In turn, this helps them to establish goals and to know where to direct their attention for further improvement and growth. The counselor can be helpful at this point in suggesting appropriate diagnostic instruments, as well as reviewing and discussing implications of past experiences.

2. **Think and act proactively**. There is a natural tendency for people to deal with what is urgent and demanding in their lives rather than what is of long-term importance. By their questions and responses, counselors can help people to be thinking and planning for future challenges and continually asking themselves questions such as, "What should I be thinking about in planning for the future? What am I doing now that will be useful to be tomorrow? What will I need to change or add or eliminate in my behavior to be more successful in the future?" By raising these questions and modeling this proactively-oriented behavior, counselors can contribute to more proactive and strategic thinking and planning on the part of the counselee.

3. **Review and renew their own situation**. A major goal of counselors is to help people become self-renewing. At its best, counseling is not a one-shot or a single, problem-oriented experience; rather, it is a growth-producing encounter that assists the client to review the past with more insight and to renew and enhance the present and the future. Counselors need to help clients think beyond immediate concerns and to adopt both a problem-solving and a renewal approach to life rather than respond to each problem or task as a separate, isolated entity.

4. **Establish, extend, and expand their personal network**. Building a network is not only demanding but also sometimes a difficult task. A counselor can assist clients to clarify the areas in which networking may be useful as well as to identify individuals who might be helpful members of such a network. While it is not the counselor's role or responsibility to nominate specific individuals, counselors can identify sources or refer clients to individuals or groups who can help them expand their own personal networks.

Conclusion

In this paper we have tried to present the highlights of what we see as important priorities for counselors in the 1990s. Not all counselors will deal with all the issues—as we said, each of us must establish our own priorities from the perspective of our own situation, our own interests, and our particular clients. But that we must do, or we will find ourselves forever responding, reacting, trying to cope, without a strong agenda that contains significant goals and allows us the time and effort to achieve them. As researchers and practitioners, the future of our profession may well be determined by the extent to

which we identify and set our priorities, and it is our own responsibility, as well as the responsibility of our associations and our leadership, to ensure that we do so.

If we agree that the future consists of a variety of alternatives, and that making choices is not only unavoidable but crucial, and that refusing to choose is in itself a choice, then we have taken the first step toward assuming a more active role in our own future. Thus, we may be able to halt any trends toward passivity and a do-nothing stance and move ourselves and our profession to challenge the rewarding future that exists within our imaginations and capabilities.